GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3556
ANSWERED ON:18.04.2005
VIOLATION OF FOREST RULES BY VEDANTA ALUMINA LIMITED
Harsha Kumar Shri G.V.;Oram Shri Jual

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Vedanta Alumina Limited has violated forestry laws at the project site at Lanjigarh in Orissa;

(b) if so, whether it is going to destroy the biodiversity of Niyamgiri hills in that State; and

(c) if so, the reaction to the Government thereto?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

(a) to (c) The Central Government on 19-10-2004, received a proposal from the State Government of Orissa for forestry clearance of 58.943 ha. of forest land in Lanjigarh Tehsil of Kalahandi district, for setting up of Alumina Refinery by M/s Vedanta Alumina Limited. While the proposal was under examination of the Central Government, the State Government has withdrawn the proposal on 28-3-2005, clarifying that the User Agency does not require any forest land for the project.

However, another proposal for forestry clearance of 660.749 ha. of forest land in Kalahandi (South) Forest Division and Rayagada Forest Division in favour of the M/s Orissa Mining Corporation Ltd. (OMC) for mining of Bauxite in Lanjigarh Bauxite Mines, Orissa, has also been received by the Central Government recently. It has also come to the notice of Central Government that the proposed mining project is linked with the project of Alumina Refinery of M/s Vedanta Alumina Limited. The Central Government is carrying out careful examination of the project from all angles including its impact on the nearby rivers/water bodies and the tribals inhabiting the area. Further, the matter is also being considered by the Central Empowered Committee, a body assisting the Supreme Court in forestry and environment related court matters. The Central Empowered Committee has directed the Ministry, not to take any decision on forestry clearance of the mining project till the directions of the Supreme Court. Ministry of Environment and Forests has conveyed its agreement to the Central Empowered Committee to this effect, and so far, forestry clearance has not been accorded to the project under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.